

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



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HOLIDAY MIXER - Joy abounds, friends rejoice, Chamber style



Smiles and festivities were abundant at the 2009 Pinole Chamber Holiday Mixer, held December 8th at The Mechanics Bank, Pinole Valley Branch. The event was deliciously catered by Pear Street Bistro with an amazing turnout by old and new members alike. Raffle prizes were great and an early Christmas was celebrated by all who attended.

The next Mixer will be the SUPER MIXER, January 13th, hosted by the El Sobrante and Richmond Chambers with representation from all the other local Chambers— including El Cerrito, Pinole, San Pablo and more.

The next Pinole Chamber Mixer will be held January 27th at the Antler's Tavern, with catering provided by Sunset Catering.

With lots planned for 2010, we hope you are able to take advantage of our many networking opportunities and we hope to see you at each and every one. *We wish each and every one of you a most prosperous 2010!*

Find the Chamber COMMUNITY Newsletter at the following locations:

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President's MESSAGE

I am ready to bid adieu...

... to 2009!

It was a difficult year for many of my friends and family. It was an especially difficult year for the small business owner. The proverbial "silver lining" was well hidden behind storm clouds as the economy reached rock bottom. Calling this economic crisis the Great Recession may be an understatement. But, sometimes the best ideas are born out of necessity.

Strength in Numbers

The Pinole Chamber of Commerce has partnered with West Contra Costa Chambers and business organizations. West County Business Expo '09 inspired local Chambers to work collectively. That spirit of collaboration will continue in 2010 as we plan West County Expo '10. Other joint events are also being planned.

The first of those is the "Super Mixer" scheduled for January 13, 2010. Super Mixer will be hosted by the El Sobrante and Richmond Chambers. All Chambers and Chamber members are invited to attend and meet other business owners.

Networking is a tried and true method for building contacts and establishing relationships. The Super Mixer takes that concept a step further, super size me!

The small business community's ability to compete with larger competitors has placed purchasing cooperatives for small business owners at the forefront. The business model for purchasing co-ops provides small businesses buying power typically afforded only to large companies with deep pockets. Co-ops currently serve 130 million people in the USA.

The co-op isn't the be-all and end-all to the small business owner's woes. But it does accentuate the need for small businesses to work together, cooperatively, collectively. Strength in numbers has never meant so much.

Strength in numbers is what the Pinole Chamber of Commerce offers you as a business owner.

I hope you will continue to support your local chamber as we work for you. **Happy 2010!**



Ivette Riccio, Chamber President

Upcoming **EVENTS**

January 13, 2010 — "SUPER Mixer"
Masonic Lodge - Richmond
5:00-7:00

January 27, 2010 — Mixer
Antler's Tavern/Sunset Catering - Pinole
5:30-7:30

February 25, 2010 — Mixer
Bella Vista @ Hilltop - Richmond
5:30-7:30

March 9, 2010
State of the City Luncheon
Sizzler Restaurant
11:30am-1:30pm

March 25, 2010 — Mixer
Bank of the West - Pinole
5:30-7:30

Making Attitude Adjustments

Improving customer service behaviors - other than replacing people

Not long ago, if a customer service employee fouled-up, he or she was warned, then if improvements didn't happen, was shown the door. In today's workplace however, where it's so difficult just maintaining staffing levels, dismissal doesn't really fix the problem - it just changes the problem. That means it's more important than ever for managers to be able to confront unacceptable employee behaviors without causing the person to simply walk out and get a job elsewhere. Next time one of your frontline employees needs an attitude adjustment, consider how this teacher handles a surly student...

Imagine you are a twelve year old who hates school. You despise it so much that you can hardly wait till you're old enough to drop out. It's late one Friday afternoon and you're stuck in math class gazing out the window at the beautiful day, counting the minutes until the bell rings and the weekend starts. Your reverie is suddenly interrupted by the sound of your teacher's voice. He's in the middle of issuing a

three-page homework assignment due on Monday. You and several other students start groaning. He looks directly at you and says in a low, serious voice, "I'd like to speak to you in the hallway-right now."

Now, you're embarrassed and you're probably angry. Mostly you're scared about what's next. Then it happens.

Looking you square in the eye in the deserted hallway the teacher says, "I've been watching you lately and I've noticed that you have real leadership potential. When you act a certain way, other students watch you and start doing the same thing. The problem is that when I give a homework assignment, you start rolling your eyes and saying, 'Oh, no! Do we have to do this?' Other students watch you and start doing the same thing. That makes my job harder. I wonder if you could do me a favour? Next time I give a homework assignment, could you just do nothing? It will help me, and I also think it will help you because with your leadership abilities you could go a long way in

life. Thanks. Let's go back inside the class."

Not a bad way of handling a problem student, in theory at least. But as Paul Harvey would say, "That's not the rest of the story." The rest of the story is that the twelve-year-old was me.

I hated school so much that I counted the days until I was old enough to drop out. I remember the afternoon in Varsity Acres Elementary math class when my teacher, Mr. McCullough, gave us that homework assignment. I was trying to look cool as I was being marched into the hallway. But I was scared. When Mr. McCullough gave me that two-minute talk, however, it changed my life.

Here was a teacher telling me I could be a leader and showing me a simple way I could make it happen. My parents had always encouraged me and told me I had potential-but they were only my parents. At twelve years old, what do your parents know? I took Mr. McCullough's advice,

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Sewall's View By Sewall Glinternick

November 2009, El Cerrito Byline

Agreeing to help edit the Byline while Mark Scott is on vacation gives me the opportunity to present some personal thoughts on the less than perfect conditions that exist for businesses in El Cerrito today. I haven't published these thoughts before because I felt it might be inappropriate to do so during my 13 years as manager. But now, after many months of reflection since retiring, I have come to feel there are some suggestions I could offer that would improve things for both the Chamber and El Cerrito businesses.

A lot of good things have been happening in El Cerrito these past few years, but unfortunately, business has benefited from very few of them. For both the city and its residents it has been the best of times; but for business it is the worst of times.

First I would like to address the problems that prevent the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce from doing the job it should. For years this organization has been blessed with a series of great presidents and directors who gave generously of their time and personal funds to keep the Chamber going. There are many members who loyally pay their dues every year, but do little else. As a result today there are too few people to help plan the group's promotions and practically no volunteers to staff the standing committees needed to maximize the Chamber's value to the business community.

Those who belong to the Chamber can't be blamed for this. Most members are people who must devote as much time as possible just seeing to it that their small businesses survive.

The Chamber itself has been forced over the years to spend the bulk of its time and effort seeing that the organizations finds adequate financial resources to keep going, rather than helping chart the course for the greatest possible improvement of the business community.

The next problem is posed by the many local residents who are content to display indifference about the operation of their local government. Apparently, they're unconcerned about what's going on down at city hall where the bureaucrats

See "Sewall" page 5



A Report from the Policy Committee

The Pinole Chamber of Commerce has established a Policy Committee for the purpose of representing the interests of business before our elected officials and their staffs. The Policy Committee is off to a running start only a few months into its creation:



The City Council was considering a recommendation by the Redevelopment Agency staff to expand its small business loan program to permit loan proceeds to be used to construct tenant improvements. Originally, the City's loan funds could be used only for permanent improvements, which limited the usefulness of the program, for it is the cost of tenant improvements that is often the greatest barrier to a new business or a landlord seeking a new business. The Policy Committee supported that change before the City Council and it passed. We hope that this will make the City's loan program more useful and more successful in bringing new businesses into Pinole and encouraging existing businesses to remain and expand.

The Policy Committee met with the City's Redevelopment Agency staff to find out about all of the programs of the City of Pinole designed to assist and grow businesses in the City of Pinole. We found that Pinole has a number of such programs and that the City has been quite aggressive in using its programs to subsidize new and existing businesses. While there may be disagreements over the success -- or wisdom -- of some of the investments made by the City, there is no denying the depth of Pinole's commitment to bringing businesses into the City and to helping existing businesses. We hope that with future input into such decisions by the City, with the assistance of input from Chamber members to the Policy Committee, we can help make the programs more effective.

The City is considering whether San Pablo Avenue should be narrowed from four lanes to two. The idea behind the narrower street would be to slow down traffic and offer more on-street parking, thus encouraging motorists to stop and patronize businesses along San Pablo Avenue, and to discourage commuters from using San Pablo Avenue as a highway. The City has asked the Chamber to help it get input from the business community, to develop a sense of whether the business community thinks this would be a good idea. The Policy Committee is planning to hold a meeting -- as of the date of this article tentatively scheduled for Decem-

ber 17, 2009, at 11:30 a.m. at a conference room in the Kaiser Medical Office Building -- at which we can present more details about the proposal and hear from Chamber members and other businesses what they think of the idea. Mark the date on your calendars and bring your friends and acquaintances who also own local businesses.

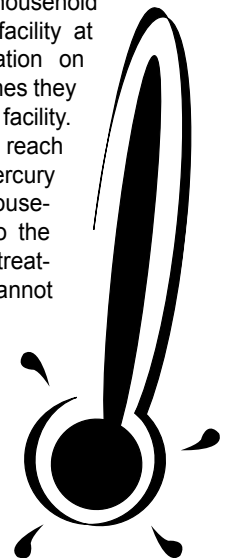
If any Chamber Member, or any Pinole business, has an issue with a proposed act by the City or County, or has a proposal for an act they would like to see on behalf of the City or the County, please feel free to bring it to the Policy Committee of the Chamber to solicit the input and assistance of the Chamber. Please try to give us a lot of advance notice, however, because the Chamber needs time for the Policy Committee to hear all sides of an issue and give it careful consideration, then to take it to the Board of Directors of the Chamber to seek official Chamber endorsement of its recommended position.

Joshua G. Genser, Genser & Watkins LLP, 125 Park Place, Suite 210, Point Richmond, CA 94801, Phone: 510 237-6916, Fax: 925 885-0335, www.genserandwatkins.com

Mercury Thermometer Exchange Program

Pinole Hercules Water Treatment Plant kicked off a mercury thermometer exchange program during pollution prevention week in September 2009. The staging points for Pinole and Hercules residents to recycle old mercury thermometers are at Pinole's City Hall, 2131 Pear Street and the Senior Center, 2500 Charles Avenue. Simply double zip lock bag your old thermometer or bring it in its protective container and exchange your old mercury thermometer for a free digital thermometer. You can also take them to the West County Household Hazardous Chemical Recycling Facility at 101 Pittsburg Avenue (just off the Richmond Parkway) in Richmond along with your other household hazardous waste. Call the HHW facility at 1-888-412-9277 for more information on what items they accept and what times they are open to bring things into the facility.

Mercury has the potential to reach San Francisco Bay when the mercury containing thermometers break in household sinks. The mercury flows into the sewer system at the wastewater treatment plant. The treatment plant cannot effectively remove toxic metals like mercury and the metal can bypass treatment and end up in the bay. The mercury enters into and contaminates fish tissue. When humans eat contaminated fish, the mercury can hinder brain development, especially in fetuses and young children.



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have developed an operating system that effectively prevents the public from interfering too much in the governing process.

But, blaming the residents for not paying enough attention to local government would be wrong. Their apparent lack of concern is simply the result of the fact they're satisfied that their property values and service have held steady while business has taken a big hit during the current economic down-turn. Besides, today's economic conditions require most residents to concentrate completely on meeting the financial demands of their day-to-day existence.

The local government itself also deserves a close look. While all at city hall are courteous, intelligent and devoted, they are also subject to having to gain re-election or the economic pressure of having to justify their employment, even if it means working up a number of make-work projects.

You can't be too harsh in judging these officials. Those on the City Council are all good, well-meaning individuals who, for the most part, gain office without any real experience in what it takes to run a business in this community. Most of the city staff are equally ignorant of the problems the business community of El Cerrito must deal with.

While it is hard to find any individual to blame for these unpleasant circumstances, I respectfully suggest there are at least a few easily made improvements that would benefit the Chamber of Commerce and its members.

First, individual Chamber members must begin to realize

they owe this organization more than their dues. Without being specifically asked, they're going to have to volunteer their time if the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce is ever going to reach its full potential and operate like a well-oiled machine. Next, while the city has been generous with the Chamber when asked in the past, city hall is going to have to stop thinking of this assistance as a "gift" and regard it as an "investment" in the city's future. After all, if the Chamber was not around to continuously promote El Cerrito and handle the concerns of local businesses, the city would have to hire more people or an expensive outside consulting service to do the job.

If city officials ever come to their senses and make financial support of the Chamber an integral part of the budget without unreasonable preconditions, it would eliminate the need for the management of this organization to spend the bulk of its time trying to raise money instead of concentrating on work to build the business community.

What is all boils down to is this:, the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce needs a lot more heavily committed members so those in local government can finally be convinced this organization should be used to provide them with a constant source of information about the needs and opinion of business here.

Sewall Glinternick is the former Manager of the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce. Reprinted with the permission of Mr. Glinternick.

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and it changed everything. From that day forward, I got along better with teachers and, not surprisingly, received better grades. I ended up staying in school because Mr. McCullough knew how to change a cynical kid's attitude. I've thought about that conversation many times since then and realized as I began studying frontline employee motivation, that he did two things particularly well...

Two keys to corrective feedback

First, he focused on behaviour, not attitude. In other words, it doesn't do much good for a manager to tell employees that they are not friendly enough with customers. Friendliness is an attitude. The employee thinks, "I am friendly! You're being unfair." Instead, a supervisor would get better results by focusing on observable behaviour. The supervisor might say, "The customer walked in. You avoided making eye contact until she asked you a question. Then you frowned as you responded." That's observable behaviour. No one can argue the facts. That leads us to a second

reason Mr. McCullough's approach worked.

He gave a positive direction. He told me exactly the behaviour change that needed to be made ("Next time I give a homework assignment, could you just do nothing?") In the case of an unfriendly employee, we might say, "The expectation here is that within ten seconds of a customer walking in the door you are expected to smile enough to show teeth and greet them." In other words, rather than saying you need to be more friendly, explain exactly what that looks like. Add to that your underlying belief in the potential of the employee and you could end up making a significant impact not only on your company but also upon the lives of your employees. Maybe, like me, they'll not only improve their behavior, they'll also remember fondly what you said decades later.

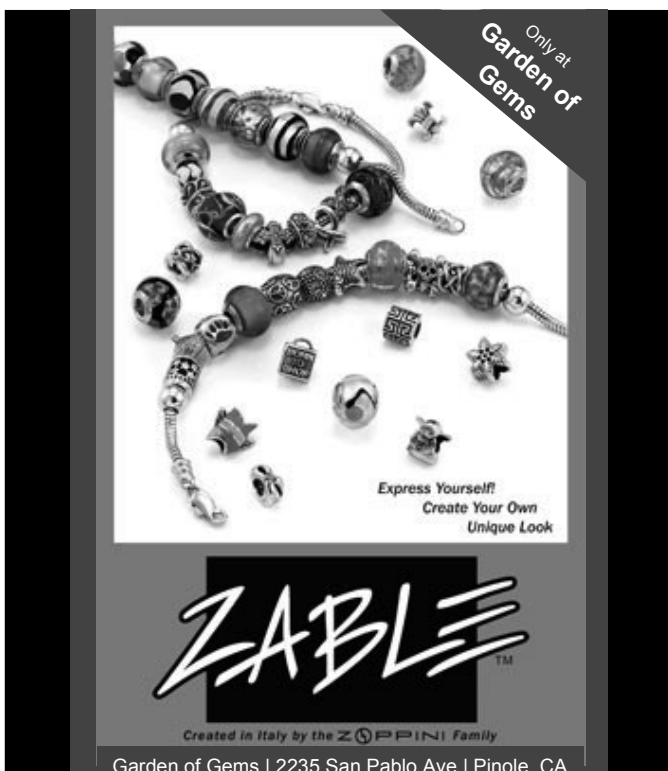
*This article is based on the critically acclaimed book *Becoming a Service Icon in 90 Minutes a Month*, by customer service strategist and professional speaker Jeff Mowatt. To obtain your own copy of his book or to inquire about engaging Jeff for your team, visit www.jeffmowatt.com or call 1.800.JMowatt (566.9288).*



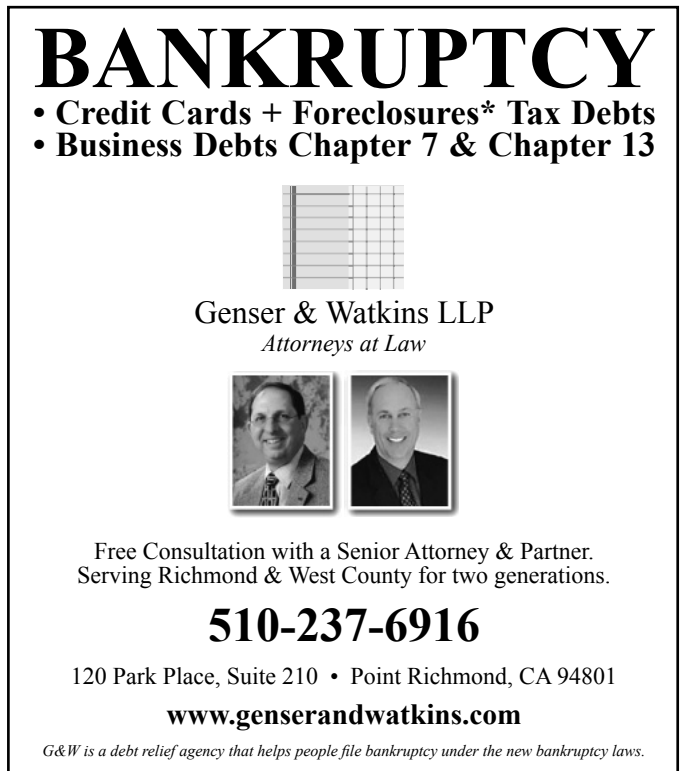
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